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Hundreds of Knives Are Seized in Raids on Two Stores

By MICHAEL WILSON

Lucky, a variety store and longtime fixture on the Lower East Side, stocks shelf after shelf of dolls that crawl, fire engines with sirens and Pokémon toys. But yesterday, the police said, a raid turned up dozens of illegal weapons, including "gravity knives" that release hidden blades from a handle with a flick of the wrist, and brass-knuckle knives that cut with every punch.

Most of the items seized, as described by the police, are clearly outlawed under city law: 2 switchblades, 216 gravity knives, 13 brass knuckle knives, throwing knives and 21 daggers or swords at least a foot and a half long. The police said the weapons were hidden in plain sight, under display cases, in the shop, at 79 Clinton Street.

"We've had the same merchandise all this time," said a daughter of one of the men arrested Tuesday at the shop, Robert Shin, 65, of Searingtown, on Long Island. "That's why it's so bizarre." The daughter, who would not give her name, said Mr. Shin would "fight the case vigorously."

The police said they also arrested Hector Celero, 24, of Corona, Queens.

At a second store, Army & Navy, a military surplus shop at 177 East Houston Street in Manhattan, the police said they seized 34 gravity knives and arrested Zygmunt Majcher, 53, of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. Upon his arrest, Mr. Majcher said he had been selling the items for "a long time," a law enforcement official said.

All the charges are misdemeanors. All three men pleaded not guilty yesterday in Manhattan Criminal Court.

The police said their sweep was intended to find knives before they are used on people.

"It was to try to be proactive and progressive in the sale of weapons that are frequently involved in acts of violence in this precinct," said Deputy Inspector Brian McCarthy of the Seventh Precinct.

Three of the precinct's six homicides this year were committed with cutting instruments, as were 35 of the 162 robberies and 25 of the 122 felony assaults, Inspector McCarthy said.

"We're trying to get them before they get in the hands of people who end up committing these crimes," he said.

The police said they also seized handcuffs, fake Major League Baseball and New York police hats, and "thumb-cuffs," a device the inspector said was new to him. "I'm not sure if they qualify as being handcuffs, but we took them anyway until we're sure," he said.

Law enforcement and peace officers are allowed to buy handcuffs and other items off limits to civilians. Police officers regularly visited the Army & Navy store, said a cashier at a neighboring music store. "I've seen lots of cops going in there and buying stuff," said the cashier, Jay, 21, who would not give his last name. "They park and walk in."

But Inspector McCarthy said he knew the area and did not believe the store was popular among officers.

Neither shop opened yesterday. A coin-operated rocking horse blocked the door of Lucky, which Mr. Shin's daughter said has been a neighborhood fixture for about 20 years.

Photo: The Army & Navy store at 177 East Houston Street in Manhattan, where the police said they seized illegal knives yesterday. (Photo by Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times)